

Message Text

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S E C R E T ATHENS 7521

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, GR, US

SUBJECT: US-GREEK BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS: HELLENIKON

SUBGROUP MEETING - OCTOBER 1

REFS: (A) STATE 227838; (B) ATHENS 7003 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: FIRST MEETING OPENED WITH BOTH SIDES RECAPPING HISTORY OF HELLENIKON NEGOTIATIONS. US SIDE THEN PRESENTED DISADVANTAGES OF GOG RELOCATION PROPOSALS. GREEK SIDE WAS QUICK TO AGREE. GREEK SIDE STATED WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON HELLENIKON REDUCTIONS STATING IT WAS OUR LEAD TO PROPOSE A NEW BASE, POPULATION FIGURE. US SIDE RAISED FUTURE OF HELLENIKON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MOVE AND ASKED ABOUT TIMETABLE OF GREEK MILITARY WITHDRAWAL.

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GREEK SIDE RESPONDED NO SCHEDULE WAS AVAILABLE BUT THAT

IT APPEARED INEVITABLE THAT THE GREEK MILITARY ACTIVITIES WOULD MOVE. US SIDE STATED WE WOULD BE PREPARED AT THE NEXT MEETING TO MAKE A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL ON HELLENIKON POPULATION. THE NEXT MEETING WAS SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3. END SUMMARY:

1. GREEK SPOKESMAN (BG KOURIS, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, HAF) OPENED THE HELLENIKON SUBGROUP MEETING OCTOBER 1 WITH A RECAPITULATION OF THE SUBGROUP'S GENESIS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS WORK. THE US DELEGATION RESPONDED BY NOTING SALIENT POINTS OF JUNE/JULY 1975 MEETINGS, INCLUDING US UNDERTAKING TO REDUCE TO LEVEL OF 1,150 US PERSONNEL AT THE BASE, TO STUDY WAYS OF REDUCING FURTHER, AND TO EXAMINE POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF THE RECONNAISSANCE ACTIVITY. US DELEGATION REPORTED THAT WAYS HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED TO REDUCE BELOW 1,150, BUT THAT THE NUMBER COULD NOT BE BROUGHT CLOSE TO 450-500 WITHOUT RELOCATING MAJOR ACTIVITIES. THE MILITARY, FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RELOCATION OPTION WERE THEN ADDRESSED IN SOME DETAIL, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE INEVITABLE GROWTH OF A MAJOR US PRESENCE AT ANOTHER GREEK BASE AND THE POLITICAL PROBLEM THAT THIS COULD CREATE FOR THE GREEK GOVERNMENT. IN THIS CONNECTION, US REPS CITED OPPOSITION WHICH HAD BEEN STIMULATED ON CRETE TO RELOCATION OF US FACILITIES AS EXAMPLE OF WHAT COULD OCCUR ELSEWHERE. IN LIGHT OF THESE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS, US REPS THEN ASKED GREEK SIDE IF IT HAS SECURED ANY FLEXIBILITY CONCERNING LINKAGE OF PERMISSIBLE US STRENGTH LEVEL WITH HAF PERSONNEL LEVEL ON BASE. US REPS ALSO ASKED GREEKS TO COMMENT ON THE RECENT PRESS ARTICLE (REF B) STATING THAT GOG HAD TAKEN DECISION TO REMOVE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO ANOTHER SITE, WITH MOVEMENT OF MILITARY ACTIVITIES TO PRECEDE CLOSURE OF HELLENIKON.

2. THE GREEK SIDE RESPONDED TO THE US PRESENTATION BY STATING THEIR APPRECIATION OF THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH RELOCATION, BOTH FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL. EXPRESSING AWARENESS OF POSSIBLE POLITICAL COMPLICATIONS STEMMING FROM RELOCATION THE GREEK SPOKESMAN BELIEVED THESE SHOULD NOT PRECLUDE THE SUBGROUP FROM LOOKING AT VARIOUS POSSI-

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BILITIES. CONCERNING RELOCATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, HE BELIEVED IT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE MOVED AND NOTED THAT GREEK MILITARY FLIGHTS HAD ALREADY VIRTUALLY STOPPED IN RESPONSE TO LOCAL COMPLAINTS RE NOISE LEVEL. WHILE INDICATING THAT NO TIMETABLE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED, THE GREEK SPOKESMAN STATED THAT THE DECISION TO MOVE HAD BEEN MADE AND THIS WAS A NEW FACTOR WHICH BOTH SIDES WOULD HAVE TO KEEP IN MIND. IN THE COURSE OF DISCUSSION

ON THIS ISSUE, THE GREEKS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SUCH A MOVE WOULD TAKE AT LEAST FIVE YEARS. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE MOVE WOULD BE PHASED AND THAT MILITARY ACTIVITIES, BEING THE EASIEST FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RELOCATE, DOUBTLESS WOULD GO FIRST. RESPONDING TO A US SUGGESTION, THE GREEK SPOKESMAN SAID IT WOULD NOT BE FEASIBLE TO MOVE MORE GREEK MILITARY ONTO THE AIRPORT, RATHER THAT THE HAF ACTIVITIES WOULD PHASE DOWN GRADUALLY LOOKING TOWARD EVENTUAL PHASE OUT. THE US SIDE NOTED THAT, IF THE US FORCES WERE FACED WITH THE PROSPECT OF EVENTUALLY HAVING TO RELOCATE ENTIRELY FROM HELLENIKON, IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO MOVE IN PART TO A BASE WHICH MIGHT PROVE UNSUITABLE FOR EVENTUAL TOTAL RELOCATION.

3. ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF FLEXIBILITY ON THE NUMBER OF US PERSONNEL TO REMAIN AT THE BASE, THE GREEK SPOKESMAN SAID FLEXIBILITY HAD BEEN DEMONSTRATED IN MOVING FROM 200 TO 400-500, AND THAT IT WAS UP TO THE US TO STATE WHAT COULD BE DONE. HE NOTED THAT MUCH OF THE REDUCTION TO 1,150 WAS TIED TO THE TERMINATION OF HOMEPORTING, AND THAT FURTHER CUTS SHOULD BE POSSIBLE. THE US SIDE REPLIED THAT REDUCTIONS BELOW 1,150 COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BY, AMONG OTHER THINGS, MOVEMENT TO LEASED FACILITIES NEAR THE BASE, BUT THAT THE GREEK FIGURE COULD NOT BE APPROACHED WITHOUT MAJOR RELOCATIONS TO ANOTHER AIR BASE. REITERATING THE POSITION THAT THERE MUST BE FEWER US THAN GREEK MILITARY PERSONNEL, THE GREEK SPOKESMAN SAID HIS INSTRUCTIONS DID NOT PERMIT HIM TO MAKE A NEW PROPOSAL AND THAT THE US MUST EXAMINE THE PROBLEM AND PROPOSE A NEW FIGURE. HE ADDED THAT IF THE US PROPOSAL WERE SUFFICIENTLY CLOSE TO THE GREEK POSITION, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO REFER THE MATTER TO THE GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL WITH A REQUEST FOR INSTRUCTIONS. THE US SIDE STATED THAT
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IT WOULD PRESENT A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL AT THE NEXT MEETING, TO BE HELD ON OCTOBER 3, AND ASKED THE GREEK SIDE TO CONSIDER WHAT OTHER ADDITIONAL HAF BASES MIGHT BE CONSIDERED FOR POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF US ACTIVITIES.

4. COMMENT: THE INITIAL SESSION WENT AS ANTICIPATED, WITH NO SURPRISES EXPERIENCED BY EITHER SIDE. DISCUSSION OF NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT MANY STEPS REMAIN BEFORE MOVEMENT TO TAKE PLACE, ALTHOUGH AN EVENTUAL IMPACT ON VIABILITY OF US PRESENCE AT HELLENIKON SEEMS LIKELY.
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